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NOW, DGCA ASKS AIRLINES TO KEEP MIDDLE SEATS VACANT

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation on Monday asked airlines to keep middle seats empty to the extent possible

IF SEAT OCCUPIED, PROTECTIVE GEAR MUST

If a flyer has been allotted the middle seat due to high passenger load, then "additional protective equipment like wrap-around gown of the Ministry of Textile-approved standards" must be provided in addition to a three-layered face mask and face shield, the DGCA said. "However, members of the same family may be allowed to sit together," it added

ACTION FOLLOWS SUPREME COURT NUDGE

- The aviation regulator's action follows a nudge from the SC
- While hearing a petition on whether to keep middle seats in flights vacant or not, the Supreme Court had on May 25 said the DGCA can alter the norms in the interest of public health and safety of passengers "rather than of commercial considerations"

50%

AVERAGE PASSENGER LOAD SINCE DOMESTIC FLIGHTS RESUMED ON MAY 25

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In a video conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses CM B S Yediyurappa, Governor Vajubhai Vala and others at the 25th Foundation Day celebrations of the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences in Bengaluru on Monday | EXPRESS

Modi praises Karnataka for fighting Covid better

PM gives push for tele-medicine, warns mobs against attacking docs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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IN a morale booster to healthcare professionals in the state, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday appreciated "the efforts of the Karnataka government in handling the Covid-19 situation".

He condemned attacks on doctors in the past and warned mobs that violence, abuse and rude behaviour against Covid warriors is not acceptable. "Steps have been taken to protect you from any form of violence, and we have provided an insurance cover of Rs 50 lakh for those on the frontline," he said, assuring healthcare workers.

Stressing the importance of technology in overcoming healthcare delivery issues, he said that doctors and other professionals need to discuss and achieve advances in telemedicine and evolve newer models to make it popular on a larger scale.

Virtually addressing the 25th Foundation Day of the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, he said that the Arogya Setu mobile app has been downloaded by 12 crore people, which has helped the government in fighting Covid-19.

Modi pointed out that the country has established four pillars of health over the last six years to improve the general health of the population. "The first is preventive healthcare, with yoga, Ayurveda and general fitness. More than 40,000 wellness centres have been opened with the focus on controlling lifestyle-related diseases," he said.

The second pillar is the "success of Swacch Bharath Mission", while the third is better medicare delivery. To improve the medical education infrastructure, postgraduate medical institutes will be set up in every district across the country. "We have established 22 more All-India Institutes of Medical Sciences," Modi said. P5

KARNATAKA COVID-19 BATTLE

187 TEST POSITIVE ON MONDAY

1,328 Recoveries so far

52 Total Deaths

3,408 Total Cases as on Monday

MORE UPDATES

- Nonagenarian dies in Bengaluru Urban
- Kalyana Karnataka region's count crosses 1,000 cases
- 7 cops test positive in Shivamogga dist

YOUR NEWSPAPER IS TOTALLY SAFE

Scope, sweep of MSMEs just got bigger

₹50k cr equity infusion for small biz; stressed firms to receive ₹20k cr for unsecured loans

ANURADHA SHUKLA @ New Delhi

EXTENDING a lifeline to India's struggling micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), badly hit by the Covid lockdown, the Union Cabinet on Monday approved tweaking the definition of MSMEs to enable more companies to claim the benefits available to small businesses.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by PM Narendra Modi, also approved provisioning of ₹20,000 crore as subordinated debt to provide equity support to stressed MSMEs.

The Cabinet also cleared equity infusion of ₹50,000 crore for small-scale units through a Fund of Funds, which will help MSMEs to be listed and raise funds from the market. According to the new definitions, MSMEs with an investment of ₹1 crore and turnover of ₹5 crore will be classified as micro-units, units with an investment of ₹10 crore and turnover of ₹50 crore as small units, and those with investment of ₹50 crore and turnover of up to ₹250 crore as medium units.

The policy change was already announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman last month as part of Aatmnirbhar Bharat package. While she had proposed definition for medium enterprises as companies with investment of up to ₹20 crore and turnover of ₹100 crore, companies requested that it be enhanced.

"This will help in attracting investments and creating more jobs in the MSME sector," an official statement said.

Union Minister for MSMEs Nitin Gadkari said the sector is very critical for the economy and 60 million MSMEs contribute as much as 29% of the GDP, 48% of total exports, and generate 110 million jobs.

Exporters also welcomed the move, saying the change will help in ease of doing business and attract more investment.

"Excluding exports turnover from total turnover will help in internationalisation of MSMEs and will bring their focus on exports. This will also benefit gems and jewellery companies," said Sharad Kumar Saraf, president, Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

₹250-crore firms now MSMEs

Earlier, MSMEs were defined on the basis of investments put in by the company | Now, turnover will also be considered. (Export revenue will be excluded from total turnover)

MICRO
A business will now be classified as a 'micro' unit if it has investments up to ₹1 crore and turnover of less than ₹5 crore
Earlier, manufacturing units with investment below ₹25 lakh and services firms with investment under ₹10 lakh were considered micro units

SMALL
Investment limit raised from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore with turnover not exceeding ₹50 crore

MEDIUM
Investment limit raised from ₹20 crore proposed in the Atmanirbhar package to ₹50 crore and turnover from ₹100 crore to ₹250 crore

SERVICES SECTOR
Earlier, the investment limit for services businesses was less than that of manufacturing firms. Now both manufacturing and services will be treated equally

Moody's downgrades India rating

Moody's on Monday downgraded India's sovereign rating to 'Baa3' from 'Baa2'. "While today's action is taken in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, it was not driven by the impact of the pandemic... (it) amplifies vulnerabilities in India's credit profile that were present and building prior to the shock," it said | P10

Factory output falls in May

Despite staggered easing of lockdown curbs, India's manufacturing activity continued to contract in May, a monthly survey showed. The manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI), released by IHS Markit, stood at 30.8 in May, which was a shade better than the record contraction in April at 27.4.

MSP UP, NEW LAW TO REPLACE MANDI SYSTEM

On a day the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved raising the Minimum Support Price for kharif crops by at least 50%, Union Minister for Agriculture Narendra Singh Tomar on Monday said a new legislation will be introduced to give full freedom to farmers to sell their produce. Expected to dismantle the existing Agriculture Produce Marketing Act Committee, the new law is intended to replicate e-NAM. Though agriculture is a state subject, buying and selling produce is a matter of trade. Producers should be able to sell to anyone who offers maximum price, he said.

RBI leash, low recap stymie govt banks

SUNITHA NATTI @ Hyderabad

BANK credit to MSMEs may take a turn for the worse with five banks remaining under RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA), which prohibits lenders from doing regular banking business, including lending and deposit mobilisation.

Of the 11 banks placed under PCA, five exited the restrictive framework last year, but lending may still be subdued as three of them are undergoing merger, which could slow down credit offtake.

That banks under PCA saw a drastic reduction in business last year was evident from their credit flows. For instance, IDBI Bank, which continues to be under PCA, saw its net advances plunge to ₹1.46 lakh crore in FY19 from ₹1.71 lakh crore in FY18. Similarly, Central Bank of India's lending fell from ₹1.56 lakh crore in FY18 to ₹1.46 lakh crore, while UCO Bank's eroded from ₹1.07 lakh crore to ₹99,314 crore.

The five banks under PCA are Indian Overseas Bank, Central Bank of India, UCO Bank, United Bank of India and IDBI Bank. While LIC took over IDBI Bank, UBI is to be merged with Punjab National Bank. The other three will be independent.

Five banks that exited PCA last year are Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra (both to remain independent), Oriental Bank of Commerce, Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank, which are undergoing the merger process with other state-run lenders.

Dena Bank ceased to exist as an individual entity, following its merger with Bank of Baroda last April. Analysts say banks need urgent recapitalisation to exit PCA and get back to lending.

EXPRESS READ

LPG, ATF prices hiked following global cues

New Delhi: The price of non-subsidised cooking gas LPG was hiked by Rs 11.5 per cylinder on Monday, on the back of firming up of international oil rates. Meanwhile, the prices of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) were hiked by a steep 56.5 per cent, but petrol and diesel prices continued to remain the same for a record 78th day.

BJP to sound poll bugle in Bihar soon

Patna: The ruling BJP will sound the poll bugle in Bihar the coming week with a 'virtual rally' by Union Home Minister and party's senior leader Amit Shah, who will address the people of the Eastern Indian state through a video conference and Facebook live, senior party leader Sanjay Jaiswal informed here on Monday. P8

Biggest coast-to-coast US protests in 5 decades

Police use tear gas to clear protesters blocking the Interstate 35 near the Austin Police Department headquarters on Sunday in Austin, Texas, during demonstrations against the death of George Floyd, who was pinned at the neck by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25 | AP | P9

In what is being described as the most widespread racial turbulence in the US since the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968, many cities witnessed protests over the death of African-American George Floyd in police custody.

75 CITIES Witness protests in six days; curfew imposed in about 40 of them

Trump bunkered
US President Donald Trump was rushed to a White House bunker on Friday night as hundreds gathered outside in protest. Trump spent nearly an hour in the bunker that is meant for emergencies

In Atlanta, Georgia, two police officers sacked for using excessive force on two young college students

Looting reported in several cities, including Philadelphia, Santa Monica and elsewhere in California. In New York, thieves raided luxury stores of Chanel, Rolex and Prada

4,400 Protesters arrested so far and charged with a range of offences, including looting, blocking motorways and breaking curfew

PITTER-PATTER

State may weather the storm, monsoon by June 5

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

JUST a few days ago, Amphan hit the east, lashing West Bengal with ferocious rain. Now, Nisarga, an Amphan-like cyclone which has been brewing over the Arabian Sea, is expected to cross Maharashtra and the South Gujarat coast on June 3. While Amphan did not bother Karnataka, Nisarga may have some effect over the State. Wind speeds are expected to reach 65-75 kmph over east-central Arabian Sea and along the Karnataka-south Maharashtra coasts from Tuesday morning. With this, an alert for the states, including Karnataka, has been issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The rains which Bengaluru and the state are experiencing now are because of the cyclone and also are part of the pre-monsoon showers, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Into this gloomy scenario comes the cheering forecast that the South-West Monsoon will hit the Karnataka coast by June 5. The monsoon arrived in Kerala on Monday, marking the commencement of the four-month-long rainfall season, the IMD said. The country receives 75 per cent of its rainfall from the South-West Monsoon during June to September. It is not only crucial for farming in the country, but also for replenishing the reservoirs, and more importantly to the economy, which is still largely dependent on agriculture.

Geeta Agnihotri, Director in-charge, IMD-Bengaluru, told *The New Indian Express* that the date for the monsoon to hit Kerala was forecast to be June 5, but was later revised to June 1. Now since the conditions are favourable, it will hit the Karnataka coast by June 5.

According to the weatherman, if it rains for five consecutive days and the winds are also favourable, then the onset of monsoon is announced. P5

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